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4 December 1980

China Report

POLITICAL, SOCIOLOGICAL AND MILITARY AFFAIRS

(FOUO 3/80)

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INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS

FRANCE BARBEIRI SEES CHINA AIMING TOWARD 'RADICAL DECENTRALIZATION'

LD111519 Turin LA STAMPA in Italian 9 Sep 80 pp 1-2

[Dispatch by France Barbeiri: "After Hua, Self-Management for a Billion Chinese"]

[Text] Beijing--Today is the fourth anniversary of Mao's death. We have not managed to discover any signs of public commemoration. Competent officials have given us to understand that no official events were planned. The National People's Congress will meet today in a session closed to the public, but it seems that not even at this session will there be any commemorative orations. This does not mean that the great historical leader is not being mentioned within the gigantic and, for the first time, lively people's congress. Mao is often invoked while discussing the ambitious reform of the system. However, the reformist plans stem rather than the "great helmsman's" errors than from his merits. The relationship between the best and worst of Mao is still being defined, but the reform being launched at present certainly cannot go down in history as an elaboration of Maoism, even if it fails to earn the definition of anti-Maoist.

On Sunday, when Chairman Hua Guofeng announced formally the most significant act of the reform (his resignation from the premiership and the proposal to transfer it to Zhao Ziyang, so as to separate party from government roles), I was talking in the same great hall of the people with one of the three most prominent protagonists of the great post-Mao swing. I was received by CCP Vice Chairman Li Xiannian for an interview which we will publish in a few days' time. Explaining to me what was going on in the hall, the representative of both the old guard and the new course involved experiences with Mao: "At the time of the Cultural Revolution Mao refused to heed other people's opinions and acted as a patriarch. All power was concentrated in Chairman Mao's hands. Having learned the lessons of history, we now want to ensure that this will not happen again, to prevent power from being concentrated in the hands of a single person! We are, therefore, adopting a system that separates party and government powers. We want the party to examine and formulate political guidelines and to leave administrative matters to the government." He explained why he too is leaving his post as deputy premier: "A man with many posts has much power, but how much capacity can he have for responsible work? This is how bureaucracy originates."

In accordance with the best parliamentary rules, the new prime minister, Zhao Ziyang, has set aside 3 days before presenting his new government list to the people's congress. We already know the names of the seven vice premiers due to leave their posts, and we know that one minister, the petroleum industry minister, is to be replaced for serious shortcomings in his work. It is expected that the seven vice premiers will be replaced by only three new ones, including the present foreign minister, Huang Hua, and the new national defense minister (it is not yet clear whether it will be Yang, chief of staff, or [Chiang], currently deputy chief of staff, replacing the old marshal [Siyang Chien].

Some interest surrounds whether or not the minister of metallurgical industry will be replaced, inasmuch as the sudden avalanche of criticisms of the government from the deputies has fallen largely on his shoulders (disproportionate investments, excessive bureaucratization with 20 deputy ministers--and when he tried to justify himself by invoking the difficulties left by the Cultural Revolution, he received the following rebuttal from a deputy: "The time has come to stop blaming the 'gang of four' for everything).

Be that as it may, whatever list Zhao presents on Wednesday evening and whatever happens to all these names, so difficult to decipher phonetically and politicall, it is far from embracing the entire extent of the reform. Its economic aspects were devised by Zhao himself. He does not conceal the fact that he developed his ideas during visits to Europe. First he carried out a number of experiments in the province where he was party secretary, Sichuan--a province only in name, since it has 100 million inhabitants. The encouraging results brought him to Beijing, as vice premier responsible for the economic system. And so we come to the present reform--autonomy for the enterprises, most of the profits to be placed at their disposal, production partly determined by the state plan and partly freely contracted on the market. An economy which regulates itself according to profits and market rules will either eventually bring down the so-called state superstructure or be itself brought down by it. In his report to the deputies Hua Guofeng explained the nature of the problem exactly: "We must defeat bureaucracy and dismiss officials who are committing errors caused by bureaucracy. Only by eliminating bureaucracy can socialism become respectable, in China at least."

With this same approach Hua tackled two central and in many respects unresolved problems of socialism: the separation of state and party and the shifting of decision-making power from administrative centers to production enterprises. As a first step there are plans for the separation of functions starting from the center, Beijing, through the provinces and districts and reaching to the people's communes and enterprises. Hitherto the party secretary was everywhere the absolute boss at all levels. In the major industrial center of Tachin we met an official who was at the same time party leader, mayor, manager of

the industrial complex and moreover a vice minister of the petroleum industry. This was, and in fact still is, the style for managing the country. From now on all functions will have to be separate: the party provides political inspiration and guidance, the central or local government administrates and the enterprise produces and manages its own affairs. Reform is a fine word: an entire body of law has to be not changed but built from scratch, inasmuch as in many areas of public life China has no laws. The entire constitution, of Maoist stamp, has to be amended, and a commission has been set up to do this, headed by the chairman of the people's congress. Then there is the abnormal problem of "cadres."

For 10 years no study went on in China. Now, for instance, only one-third of the computers bought abroad work; the rest are left idle because of the absence of essential specialists. Now 100,000 are needed and in a few years' time, with the forecast rate of development, 500,000 will be needed. And the schools are turning them out at a rate of only 2,000 a year. This was revealed by a deputy during the debate. So: schools, new cadres and young people. The problem is not only technical but subtly political. The grassroots undoubtedly accepts a reform aimed at achieving prosperity and more autonomy. The leadership which introduced the reform, remedying the 20 years of pararevolutionary chaos nurtured by Mao and the "gang of four," is composed of old cadres. There is a danger that the deaf walls of an apparatus which feels threatened by the reform will fall between the leadership and the grassroots. It is here that the battle will be decided. To demolish this wall Hua has announced the formation of workers committees in all enterprises "with the right to decide on all important issues and to choose or dismiss managers." Self-management, in other words. The term is not being used yet, but this is what is being aimed at. The target seems to be impossibly high, a utopia, this being a country of 1 billion possible future self-managers. But if we examine the issue more carefully, precisely because it is so vast, perhaps radical decentralization does constitute the only solution after all. Otherwise, there would be a return to the alternative of the reigning "son of heaven."

The future outlined by Hua Guofeng, with all his characteristic moderation, was presented in the guise of a flexible plan in which economic requirements have not caused politico-social implications to be overlooked or vice versa. A radical reform has been sought as the answer to a radical disaster.

The cautious compliments expressed by Brezhnev in Alma-Ata regarding "the responsible internal processes taking place in China, which shun Maoist concepts," have prompted no public repercussions. The most they have prompted in government circles is mirth--as if Brezhnev was implying that China is again following the Soviet path as the only possible one to socialism. I approached an official--a researcher into reform--and asked him: "Does not the present Chinese reform perhaps have some traits in common with the reformist plans of Khrushchev and Kosygin, which were

never realized as such?" I received the following peremptory reply: "In the USSR the party controls the workers, and we want to achieve the opposite. Khrushchev and Kosygin failed because of the strong opposition from the system's bosses. Why do the Soviet leaders refuse to tell the truth about Bokharin, who advocated thorough economic reforms? They do not want to change the system. The aim of our reform is the workers' right to manage. If we have used anyone else's experience, it is Yugoslav and has nothing to do with Soviet experience. If the Soviets imply any similarity, they do so because they cannot see the essence, or more likely with evil intent, to spread confusion."

In his report Hua Guofeng made no polemical comparisons or contrasts. He pretended not to have read Brezhnev's speech. But it was enough for him to mention Afghanistan and Kampuchea in one sentence to make all the Soviet bloc ambassadors jump up out of their seats and leave the congress platform in close formation.

CSO: 4020

INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS

BRIEFS

JOINT BUSINESS VENTURES--Beijing, 12 Sep (JIJI Press)--A Japanese business mission Friday asked Vice Premier Yao Yilin to create a climate that would facilitate foreign interests' joint ventures with China. Yao, minister in charge of the State Planning Commission, replied specific terms will be discussed at negotiations on individual joint ventures. Contract terms for joint ventures will be given superiority to China's domestic law, he added. They met at the Great Hall of the People here for about one hour in the morning. The Japanese side also expressed hope that Yao will visit Japan. The vice premier said he is too busy this year to make the visit. The Japanese mission, led by Chairman Toshiwo Doko of the Japan-China Association on Economy and Trade, left here for Japan in the afternoon, ending a 4-day visit to this country. [Text] [OW121553 Tokyo JIJI in English 1440 GMT 12 Sep 80]

ZHAO ZIYANG MEETS DIETMAN--Beijing, 15 Sep (JIJI Press)--Newly-installed Premier Zhao Ziyang Monday assured a visiting Japanese legislator of China's policy of further promoting its relationship with Japan. He met with Yoshimi Furui, chairman of the Suprapartisan Dietmen's League for Japan-China Friendship and former justice minister, at the Great Hall of the People. The premier said the two countries have a strong bond of friendship fostered by the late Premier Zhou Enlai, his predecessor and communist party Chairman Hua Guofeng, and Vice Chairman Deng Xiaoping. "My task," he said, "is to further consolidate that relationship." [Text] [OW161401 Tokyo JIJI in English 1347 GMT 16 Sep 80]

CSO: 4020

MILITARY AND PUBLIC SECURITY

HEBEI PROVINCE PILOT SCHOOL DESCRIBED

Neuilly LE MONITEUR DE L'AERONAUTIQUE in French Oct 80 pp 43-53, back cover

[Article by Giovanni de Briganti]

> [Text] This article is the first in a series of reports on the Chinese armed forces written following a trip made by Giovanni de Briganti last August at the invitation of the Chinese defense minister. Subsequent articles will be devoted to the 38th Air Division, the air force of the Popular Liberation Army, and the Chinese aeronautics industry.

The city of Shijiazhuang, the capital of the province of Hebei, is located 280 kilometers south of Beijing, in a mainly agricultural region. It does not have a civilian airport, but one of the pilot schools of the Chinese air force, which I was able to visit last August, is located some 15 kilometers to the northwest of the town. No particular effort has been made to camouflage the base, the entrance of which is located on a main road, over which planes fly as they take off. Security seems rather summary, being limited to a wall which is more symbolic than functional, and two guards armed only with pistols. Touring the living quarters on the base, one sees only small one-story buildings, where both permanent personnel and the student pilots are housed. With the exception of a single building containing classrooms, none of the structures, not even the control tower, has more than one story.

What immediately strikes the Western visitor, accustomed to the complex facilities at European air bases, is the poverty of the infrastructure at the Chinese bases. In fact, the Shijiazhuang base-school (like the base at Yangcun, the headquarters of the 38th Air Division) has no hangars at all, all the planes being covered with tarpaulins to protect them from the weather, and are parked, insofar as space permits, in pens protected with earth. This lack of hangars--much less concrete shelters--also pertains to the maintenance facilities, very summary moreover. When work by mechanics is needed, they go to the plane and repair it on the spot, wherever it is located on the base (runways, parking areas, pens, etc), even when a major operation such as an engine change is involved. Similarly, one notices the lack of a control tower as we know it: surveillance of the runway and the approach patterns is provided by a single man, located at the window of the first --and only--floor of a building situated immediately adjacent to the parking area. The "operations" room, for its part, comes down to four towers supporting a

thatched roof sheltering benches, as well as a rack to hold rows of helmets. The only radar installation is a truck equipped with a radar shelter near the runway, and sheltered by a building open on the two ends along its axis. Nor is there any real GCA [ground-controlled approach], except for two radio-equipped trucks parked near the end of the runway. These trucks moreover constitute the basis of the ground-air radio communications, since the control tower has only one radio set used by the single controller on duty.

The base has a single runway 2,500 meters long running in a north-south direction, the tower and parking area being to the west of it, and on either side of them there is a series of pens which can accommodate 3 or 4 planes each. The poverty of the infrastructure is matched by an extreme shortage of vehicles. The majority of personnel movements depend on bicycles, the planes are towed by trucks, and the almost total lack of runway equipment (buses, generators, carts, tank trucks, etc) which always crowd the parking areas of Western air bases is obvious.

The only exception to this lack of infrastructure is two large buildings which might be hangars located at the eastern end of the base. However no details were given about their purpose.

All of the airplanes this base-school has are, naturally, Chinese "copies" of Soviet models. One sees mainly Type 5 fighters, extrapolated from the MiG-17, in both one-seater and two-seater versions. With regard to these planes, let us note that, contrary to what has been reported in the Western press, the Chinese do designate the MiG-17 Type 5, and not Type 4, as some claim. Moreover, some Fong Shou No 2 biplanes (the Chinese designation of the Autonov An-2 Colt) are used for liaison missions, parachute drops and light transport. Two of them were parked in the pens, while a half-dozen others were lined up about 1,000 meters from the runway in the eastern area of the base. Finally, this school also has single-engine piston Type 6 planes, derived from the Soviet Yak-18, for the early training stages. The planes mentioned in this article will be described in further detail in the articles devoted to the air force and the Chinese aeronautic industry.

On the day of my visit, only a few An-2 flights took place, while the basic aerial activity involved frequent and consecutive tours of the runway by two-seater F-5s.

One last remark on the subject of flight uniforms. Contrary to the situation in the West, student pilots do not have a real flight uniform, only a costume including navy-blue uniform trousers and a cloth jacket. Nor is there any real helmet, but rather a headgear of leather reinforced on the upper portion, similar to those used by Soviet tank crews. The oxygen masks, for their part, are left in the planes, and are not assigned to the pilots individually.

The Pilot School

The Shijiazhuang base is the site of a school providing training for fighter pilots "for attack," that is to say based mainly on air-ground missions.

The school was established in 1949, the year the people's republic was proclaimed, at this same base, at which a land army unit was then stationed. In 1949 and 1950, the school was entrusted with the training of air force technicians, and the number of student pilots was negligible. Beginning late in 1950, a reorganization

of the air force school command made this school responsible for the training of fighter pilots for attack. Presently, the school directly provides two of the three aeronautical training levels through which Chinese pilots pass: base-level training and advanced training. The middle level, for its part, is provided by a school annex located at a neighboring airport, which is under the jurisdiction of the general staff of the school.

Pilots trained at Shijiazhuang have destroyed 119 enemy aircraft in the course of the wars in which they have participated. There are among its former students nine "heroes," one of whom has become a deputy commander of the Canton military region.

The school has a general staff divided into a general department and a studies department, as well as support services, and also a political department, headed by two chief commissioners. From an operational point of view, the school is divided into three school regiments, two of which provide middle-level training and the third advanced training. Each regiment is made up of two brigades. The students taking intermediary courses are not organized in regiments according to the same model, but into classes.

The two middle-level training regiments are stationed at a nearby airport, and have only a grass runway, where all of the Type 6 training aircraft are usually deployed. All of the Type 5 fighters are assigned to the advanced training regiment which is stationed at the main base, where there is, naturally, a paved runway.

At the present time, the school has 250 to 300 student pilots, as well as 200 to 250 students pursuing theoretical studies, making a total of 500 students on all levels. The permanent personnel of the school, for its part, totals 800 to 1,000 individuals.

Where flight equipment is concerned, there are 200 to 270 planes (it is impossible to obtain an accurate figure), including 100 to 140 Type 6 single-piston engines, 80 to 110 Type 5 fighters (half single-seaters and half 2-seaters) as well as 20-some An-2 single-engine liaison aircraft. However, I only saw some 20 Type 5 planes, mainly 2-seaters.

The Training of Chinese Pilots

The training given air force pilots in the People's Liberation Army is entirely different in form from that of pilots in Western air forces, although there are some similarities.

The most notable difference has to do with the organization of pilot schools. Unlike the case in France, for example, where the various air force schools have horizontal responsibility, that is to say they provide the totality of one phase of the training of flight personnel, all of the Chinese schools have vertical responsibility, that is to say they train a pilot from his enrollment in the air force until he is assigned to an operational unit.

There is in each military region (there are 11 of them in China) a pilot school, each school being responsible for the training of specialized pilots (attack,

pursuit, transport, bomber, etc) according to a scheme entirely different from that in France, where the candidates pursue joint training prior to being assigned to one of the specialization schools (Tours, Aulnat, Toulouse).

Candidates in the Chinese pilot schools come generally from the land army, but it does happen that some come directly from the civilian sector. Between 16 and 18 years of age, the candidates have certificates for the second cycle of general education. After their initial selection, they take courses at an air force preparatory school, following which an examination serves to eliminate the least apt, on the basis of academic and physical as well as ideological criteria. This selection, linked with the vast reservoir from which the Chinese armed forces can draw, ensures a choice of candidates with a very high intellectual and physical level. The selection process is very stiff, because it allows for the retention of only 1 percent of the candidates at the end of this first phase.

The candidates who have met the initial selection criteria then pursue a cycle of basic military training lasting 6 months, corresponding roughly to the "classes" pursued by recruits in France. It is only at the end of this cycle that the candidates are assigned to one or another of the pilot schools as such.

The training provided by the Shijiazhuang school takes 2 years and 4 months, and it appears that the majority of the other schools have adopted a similar scheme. The training the student pilots receive is divided into three phases: basic training, middle-level training and advanced training, representing, in Chinese terminology, basic theory, basic training and attack training. Let us note in passing that these three phases are comparable to the training stages for the student pilots at Aulnat, Cognac, Tours and Cazaux, in France, that is to say four schools at which the missions, methods and aircraft are very different.

A. Basic Theory

This first phase of pilot training is provided directly at the school and lasts 4 months, i.e. 490 class hours. It includes no approach to piloting as such, but is designed rather to familiarize the future pilots with the theory of aviation. The course includes seven main subjects: the laws of aerodynamics, navigation, firing theory, meteorology, aircraft structure, principles and functioning of piston and jet engines, principles of radiocommunications and, in addition, parachute training. Every student pilot, on completion of this first cycle, is in fact a certified parachute jumper. I was able to visit the classrooms at the school in which students were pursuing the courses in this first phase. One notes first of all the extent and the variety of the pedagogical equipment: Practically every aerodynamic principle, every law of aviation and every piece of equipment is explained through the use of adapted demonstration equipment. This equipment, often made by hand, all has moreover the merit of clarity and often ingenuity.

Each of the seven main subjects is taught in a special classroom, where the necessary equipment is available. In addition, some use is made of audiovisual methods. In fact, in the teaching of almost all the subjects films linking camera shots and explanatory diagrams are used; there is in addition a closed-circuit television system with three channels, by means of which some courses can be taught simultaneously to several classes.

In addition to this technical equipment, physical and ideological training are of great importance.

B. Basic Training

The second training cycle is that during which the student pilots make their first flight. It lasts a year and includes 770 course hours, including 150 hours in the air. This cycle is taught in a school annex located at a neighboring airport. The aircraft used in this phase is the Type 6 trainer plane, a Chinese variation of the Soviet Yak-18.

In the course of this cycle, stress is placed on piloting as such. In addition to the 150 hours of flight, the student pilots take 287 course hours devoted to the theory of piloting.

The students progress according to the traditional pattern: basic pilot training, first solo flight, circling the runway, navigation, blind flying, night flying and finally simple aerobatics.

On an average, the student pilot completes 40 percent of the planned flight hours (60 hours) in solo flight.

For the theoretical courses, broad use is made again of demonstration equipment, and the majority of the courses move into practical exercises during this phase.

C. Fighter Training

The third and last phase of fighter pilot training lasts a year, and involves 85 hours of flight in a jet aircraft (Type 5), with about 40 percent being solo flight. For this phase, the student pilots return to the school, where the facilities and the paved runway allow the use of jet aircraft.

Stress is placed on perfecting skills, but the students nonetheless have another 213 hours of theoretical classes to complete.

The instruction includes six main subjects: formation flying, blind flying and night flying, navigation, aerobatics, and for the first time, air-to-air combat and air-to-ground attack. In view of the limited use the Chinese air force makes of air-to-air missiles, the major part of air combat training has to do with firing guns. The pilots assigned to units equipped with missiles will be trained there. There is a kind of simulator, more or less homemade, moreover, for air-to-air target practice. The pilot sits in a mockup of a cockpit which can be maneuvered on three axes, and "fires" at targets attached to a small scaffolding mounted on casters. Another pedagogical apparatus simulates targets by the projection of a film on a wall.

For air-to-ground attack, weaponry is more varied, and includes rockets and bombs as well as guns. There is no simulator for this type of mission, and training for ground attack includes real firing.

It is amusing to note that the air-to-air combat simulators use as targets mock-ups of the F-100 Super Saber, or a film showing the maneuvers of a B-29 Stratofortress. In other words, vintage aircraft!

In the course of this last phase of their training, the student pilots also take political courses and general military training courses.

On completion of this third cycle, the student pilots take a final examination including tests in four fields: political education, piloting technique, piloting theory and a physical examination. The way in which the candidates have worked is also taken into account, as well as the grades they have earned since enrollment in the school.

The student pilots who pass this examination become fighter pilots, and are immediately assigned to operational units. Let us note that there is no ceremony for the presentation of "wings," nor for that matter any "wings," because the Chinese military wear no symbol of rank or specialty.

Arriving at the unit to which he is first assigned, the Chinese pilot is considered ready to serve. He does not take any more specialized training in the course of his first year at the unit, although the some 100 hours of solo flight he had at the school are naturally insufficient. It is then within his unit that the new pilot becomes familiar with armed aircraft, if they are not F-5s. To this end, the units have some two-seaters and a flight simulator.

Generally, a fighter pilot will spend his entire career within a single unit. Unlike what happens in other countries, it is in China the units which are transferred from one base to another, and not the pilots individually. It is within the unit that the young pilot will make progress and, although there are not in the Chinese air force any rigid pilot classifications (wing man, patrol leader, etc), pilots are certified for daytime flight, night flight, IFR flight on the basis of their competence.

There is a considerable flow back and forth between units and the various schools, and it often happens that a pilot is temporarily assigned to a school as an instructor.

As an alternative to assignment to a combat unit, a young pilot may choose to serve as an instructor in the school where he was trained. He then becomes an assistant instructor for a year and is then promoted to instructor. It is doubtless because of this option that the instructors at Shijiazhuang have an average of only 300 to 400 hours of flight time to their credit.

Bomber and transport pilots have a training program like that of the fighter pilots, with the exception, naturally, of the type of aircraft in which they are trained. The physical requirements are also different, and while a fighter pilot must be between 1.65 meters and 1.78 meters tall, this is not the case for pilots with other specialties.

General Considerations

The preceding pages were drafted on the basis of information supplied by the general staff of the school at Shijiazhuang, and the personal observations of the author. The following remarks are presented separately to avoid any distortion of "official" information.

Without any doubt, the strangest aspect of the training of Chinese pilots is that it is provided by a single school, providing the whole of the training, from the preliminary stage to training in armed aircraft. One can hardly see what the advantages of this plan might be, except for the rapidity with which a candidate proceeds in a little more than 2 years through all of the levels between his enrollment in the air force and his assignment to an operational unit as a pilot deemed ready for combat. On the other hand, the obviously undesirable aspects inherent in this system are numerous.

First of all, the fact that several schools in different military regions provide the same training makes a lack of qualitative uniformity among the pilots inevitable, which must have an unfavorable effect on the proper functioning of the unit. Whatever the rigor with which the programs established by the general staff are implemented, each school will in fact insist on this or that other aspect to the neglect of others which might, on the contrary, seem of primary importance to the general staff of another school. The result is, it seems, training which differs from school to school, which is unlikely to have a beneficial effect on the functional level of the units.

Similarly, one can easily imagine the cost, in terms of construction, equipping and operations, of this duplication of pilot schools, their installations, their pedagogical infrastructures and their support personnel. And, in addition, if we remember that in fact all the pilots, whether destined for pursuit, bomber or transport service, must in any case take the same basic training and the same preliminary training which could be provided by a single school, we can see how costly this system must be.

The system also requires the general staff of the air force to draw off a very large number of pilots, both on the level of schools and that of the operational units, to supply instructors to the various schools. When we realize how much the training of a pursuit pilot costs today (in France, there is talk of several million francs, the exact figure depending on the parameters used for the calculation), one can see that here again rationalization is not one of the priority goals of the Chinese air force.

If these undesirable aspects pertain mainly to infrastructure problems, there are others on the level of the quality of the training given the pilot. In fact, the entire advancement of the student pilot depends on but two types of aircraft, a single-piston-engine plane and a single-engine jet: there is no intermediary aircraft (such as the Fouga Magister in France), and the experience of the student pilot is limited thereby. It is as if in France a student pilot were to proceed directly from the CAP 10 to the Mystere IVA, without being able to benefit from experience with the Magister in Cognac. The objection will naturally be raised

that according to present plans, future French pilots will move directly from the Epsilon to the Alpha Jet. However, these two French planes were designed as a function of such a plan, which is not the case with the Yak-18 and the MiG-17.

Moreover, the fact that the whole of the training takes place at one single airport with unchanging characteristics (same runway circuit, same procedures, same weather conditions, etc) does nothing either to expand the horizons of a student pilot or to enrich his experience. What will the performance of a pilot trained exclusively at Shijiazhuang be, for example, if he is assigned to a MiG-19 unit stationed in Manchuria or Canton? How much time will it take him to familiarize himself not only with his new aircraft, but also with the new weather conditions?

Finally, it would be well to take into account the fact that when he is assigned to his unit, the young Chinese pilot has to his credit only 235 flight hours, including 100 solo hours, and only 35 hours in a single-seater jet. Beyond any doubt these totals seem inadequate, and it is doubtful if the supplmentary year of training in his unit will suffice to fill in this gap. This has to do moreover not only with the number of flight hours, but above all the ill-suited aircraft in which the flight hours were acquired.

Apart from these comments of a general nature, I was struck by two more specific considerations.

On the one hand, the student pilots I saw in training were very skillful, and on landing, for example, none of the 20 approaches I was able to observe was faulty. The student pilots seemed to be in control of their actions, and the touchdowns were effected in uniformly satisfactory fashion. This is an indication of the quality of the training the student pilots receive, but it cannot be denied that the selection of only 1 percent of the candidates guarantees a general qualitative level which we could never hope for.

The second comment has to do with the general form training takes. In fact, despite the specific characteristics of the Chinese system, and despite the undeniably old-fashioned equipment and pedagogical equipment, there is an astonishing similarity in the nature of the training offered. The subject matter is basically the same, with the exception of the political education and the parachute training, and the concept of training, which depends heavily on practical work, is rather close to the Western concept. Lecture courses, for example, are reduced to their simplest expression and are replaced wherever possible by practical work, training films, actual experience or demonstrations. One can moreover imagine the integration of Western pedagogical equipment in the existing infrastructure in Chinese pilot schools rather easily.

This shows that despite 30 years of isolation, the training given to Chinese pilots has roughly followed the development of Western training, at least in its general philosophy.

Camouflage and Decorations

These notes pertain only to those planes I actually saw at Shijiazhuang.

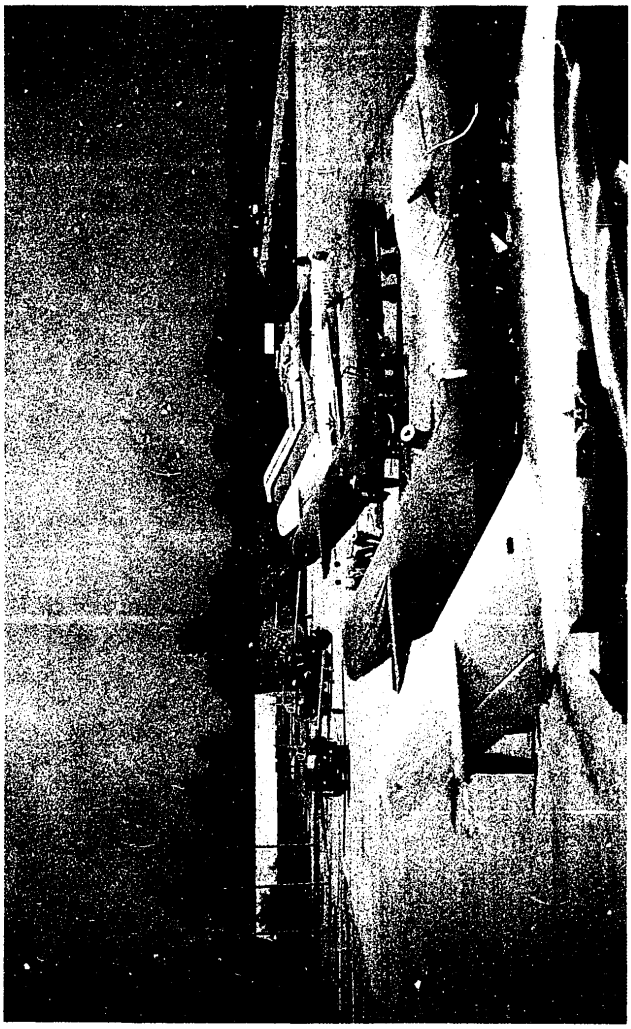
Fou Shong No 2 (Antonov An-2 Colt). The three An-2s I saw at Shijiazhuang were all painted dark green, both on the inner and outer sides of the wings. The propeller blades were painted a matte black, with yellow tips. A broad, broken white stripe was painted on the upper portion of the fuselage. A four-figure code is painted in white on top of the fin. Two of the three planes had six fuselage markings in the usual positions (two on the underside of the lower wing, two on the outer side of the upper wing, and one on each side of the rear of the fuselage), with a red background and a yellow edging. The third, on the other hand, had markings on a green background, with the same yellow edging.

T-6 (Yak-18). The only T-6 I saw at Shijiazhuang was also painted dark green. The inner and lower surfaces of the fuselage were painted a strong sky blue. The six fuselage markings were red, edged in yellow. The aircraft carried its five-figure identification (62649) on the sides of the fin, and the first and last figures (69) were repeated on the two sides of the cowling. There too the codes were painted in white.

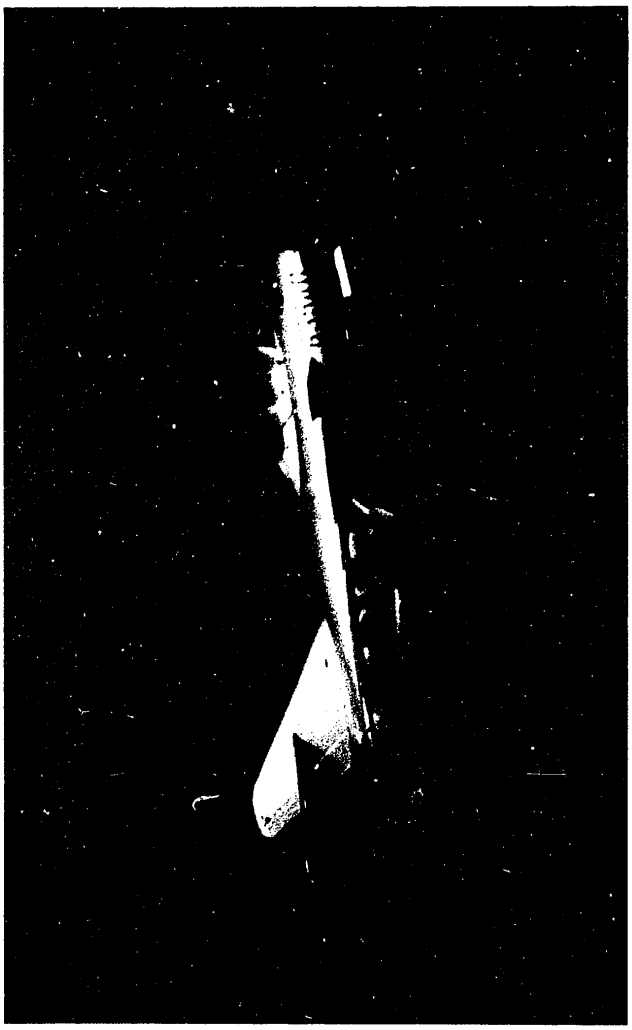
F-5 (MiG-17). The Type 5 fighters, both two-seaters and single-seaters, were all, without exception, aluminum painted. They carried a five-figure code on the nose, in large red figures, as well as a short "text" in ideograms some 20 centimeters below the leading edge of each wing. The fuselage markings, again appearing in the six positions, were red edged with yellow. They showed signs of wear, in some cases extensive.

The codes. Although no details were provided by the Chinese authorities, the codes borne by all the aircraft certainly have some significance as to the units to which the planes are assigned. The F-5s I saw at Shijiazhuang, for example, all bore a code in which the first two figures were 63. Depending on whether a single-seater or a two-seater was concerned, moreover, the third figure was generally higher or lower than 5.

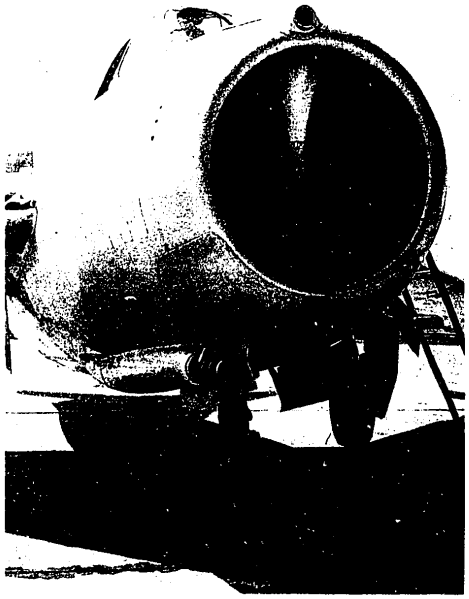
The T-6 carried the code 62, for its part, but on the fin, while the An-2s had only a 4-figure code, also painted on the fin.



In this photo of the parking area one can clearly see the dearth of vehicles. In the background, one can see only two trucks towing two F-5s. It will also be noted that three of the planes are covered with tarps, for lack of hangars.



Two-seater F-5 taking off. It will be noted that with the exception of the five-figure code and the fin, the whole of the plane has plain aluminum paint.

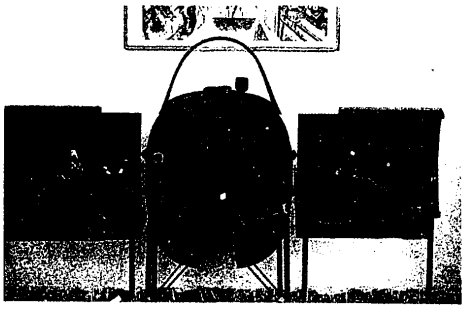


Detail view of the nose of a single-seater F-5. Above the air intake, one can clearly see the mouth of the camera gun. The weaponry of the F-5 includes at 37-millimeter gun (visible in the photo on the left) and two 23-millimeter guns on the left side of the fuselage.

The two-seater F-5 trainer was extrapolated by Chinese industry from the Soviet MiG-17, from which it differs mainly in the length of the fuselage and the places for two pilots. The front pilot's canopy opens to the right, while the rear canopy slides to the back. It will be noted that the upper lip of the air intake on the two-seater projects, which is not the case with the single-seater.

An F-5 on the main taxiing strip. In the background, under the shelter, one can see the radio truck which constitutes the only radar facility at the base.

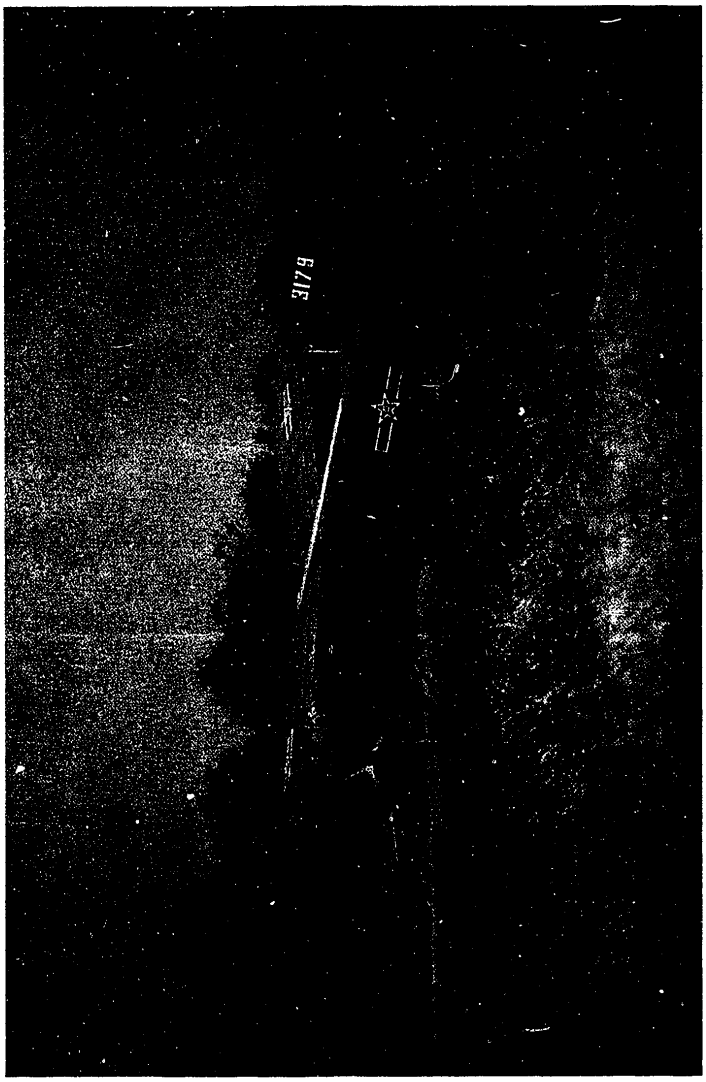
Mechanics working on a two-seater F-5 parked in an isolated area of the base. One can see the open air brake.



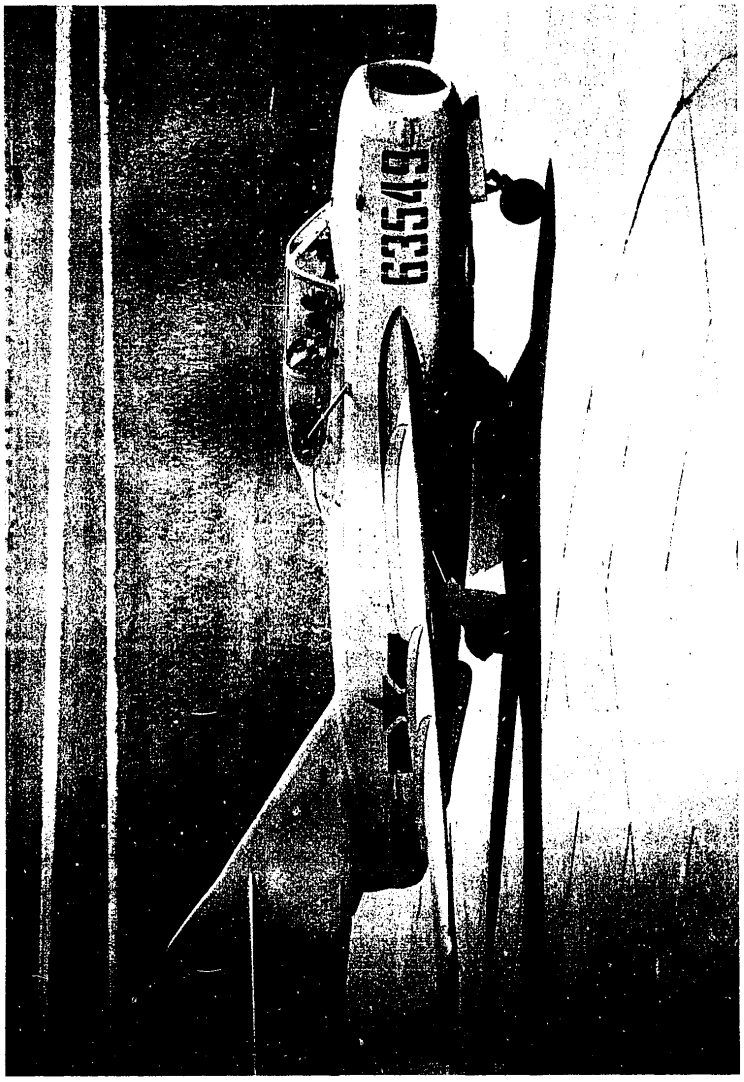
Training mock-up of the pilot's cockpit and the instrument panel in a T-6 (Chinese Yak-18) used for the first familiarization classes for the student pilots.

The homemade firing simulator at the school. The "sharpshooter" sits in the facsimile cockpit, which can be maneuvered on three axes, and "fires" at targets mounted on the mobile scaffolding visible at the left.

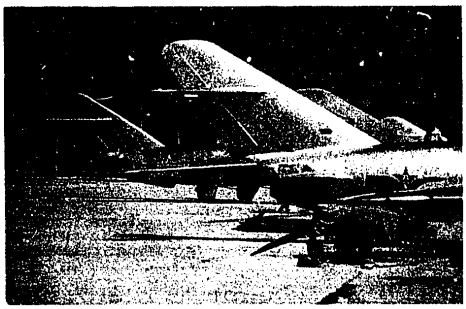
The Chinese air bases, or at least those we were able to visit, have no hangars. The planes are parked in pens, to which the mechanics go to work when needed.



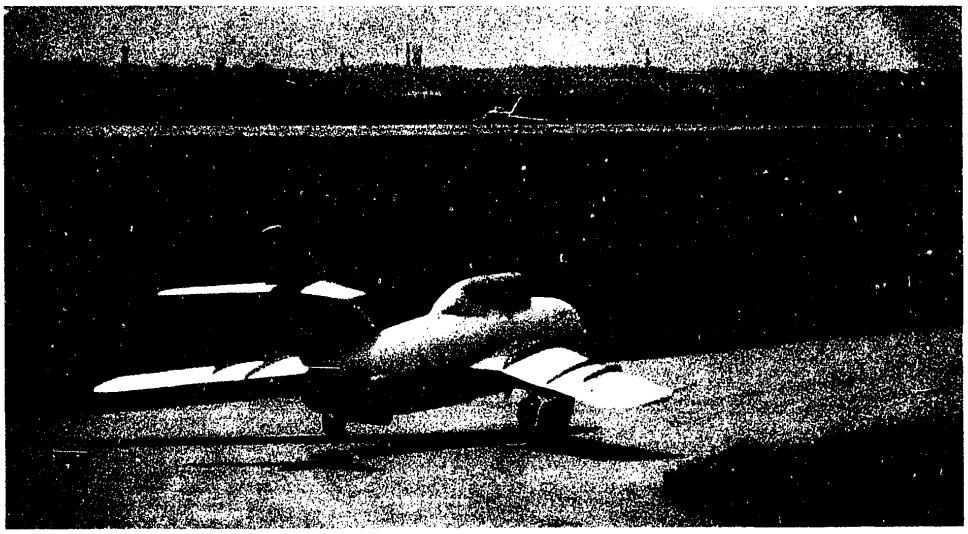
One of the three Fong Shou Type 2s we saw at Shijiazhuang. The plane in this photograph carries fuselage markings on a green background, while two others had markings on a red background.



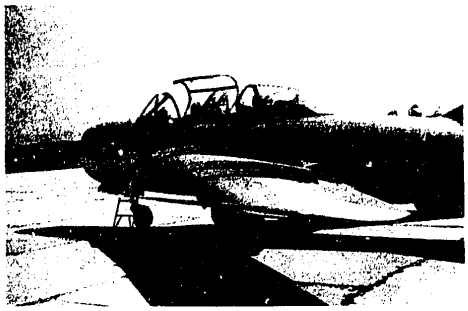
A two-seater F-5 leaves the parking area and moves toward the runway. The two-seater version of the F-5 (MiG-17) was designed and built in China before the USSR brought out the MiG-17 UTI.



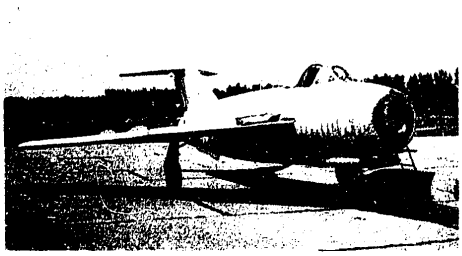
Partial view of the aerial activity in the Shijiazhuang parking area.



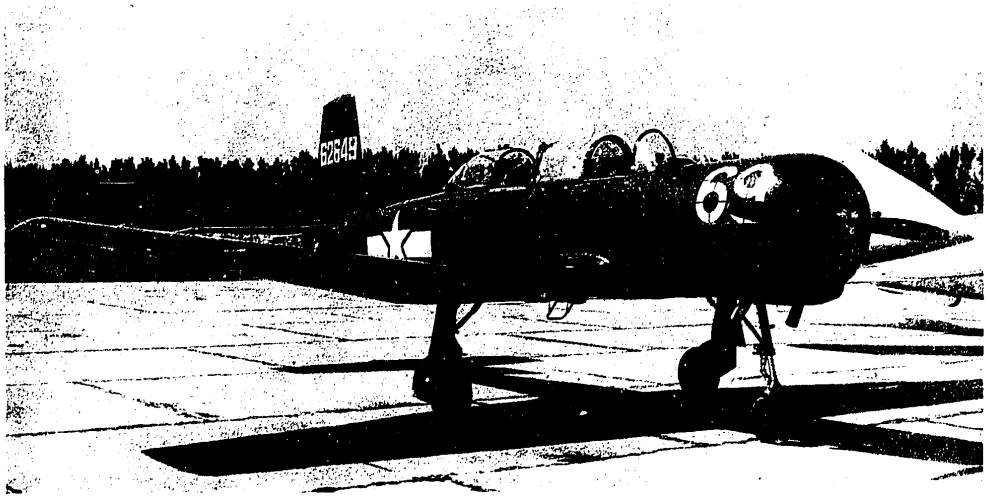
An F-5 taxis toward the runway, while in the background another plane of the same type is starting its takeoff run. On the day of our visit, the aerial activity at the base was rather intensive, but involved only two-seater F-5s.



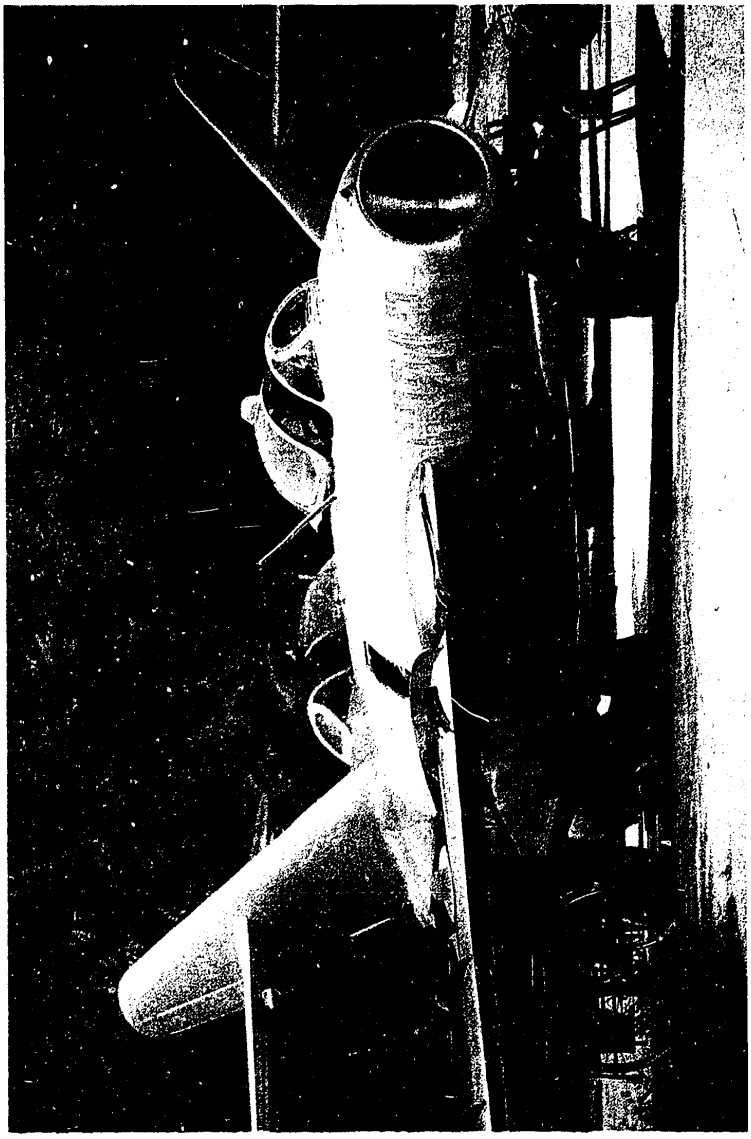
Another view of a two-seater F-5 clearly showing the size of the wing fences.



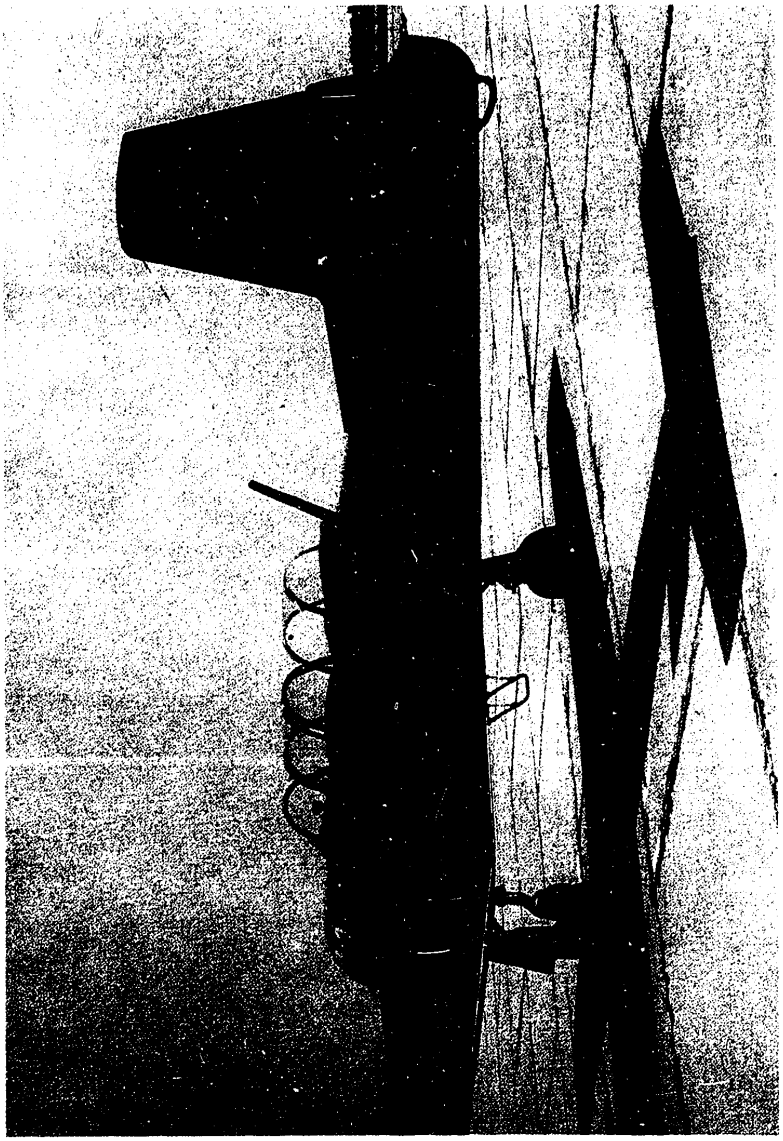
This view of a single-seater F-5 on the ground makes it possible to see the main differences between the two versions of this plane.



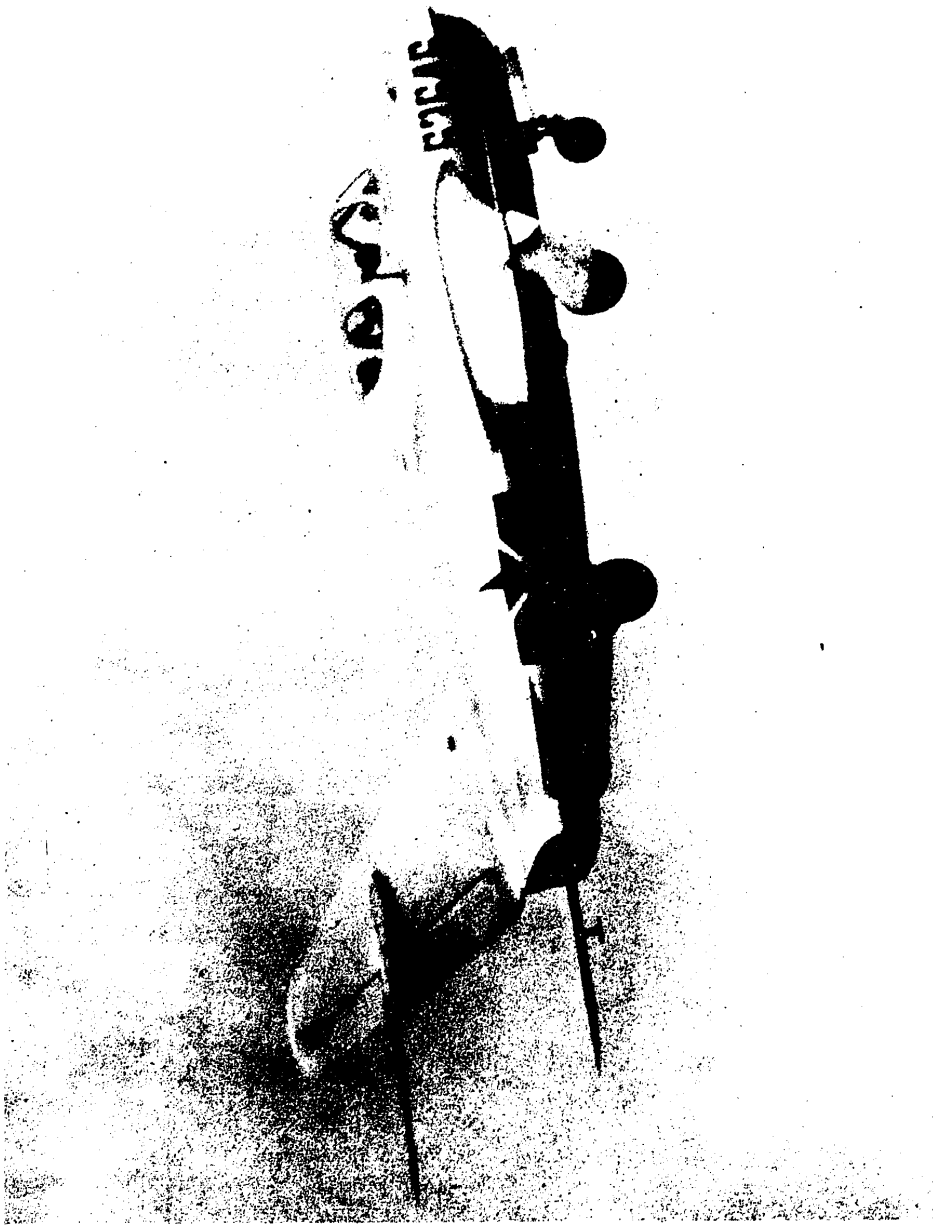
The Type 6 training plane, the Chinese version of the Yak-18, differs from the Soviet plane in the fin, engine and cowling, as well as the greater part of its equipment.



An F-5 single-seater during maintenance operations in a pen. This photograph clearly shows the outdated service methods of the mechanics, whose tools and means of transportation are limited to what is strictly necessary.



A single-engine Type 6 trainer, extrapolated from the Soviet Yak-18. The Chinese version differs from the Soviet plane in the form and surface of the fin, the antenna strut, the engine and cowling.



General view of the parking area at the Shijiazhuang base, with single-seater and two-seater Type 5 fighters neatly aligned. In the background, a team of mechanics is preparing a Type 5 two-seater for a training mission.

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END